



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/608,832	06/26/2003	Harvey E. Cline	29309	7596

6147 7590 01/04/2007  
GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY  
GLOBAL RESEARCH  
PATENT DOCKET RM. BLDG. K1-4A59  
NISKAYUNA, NY 12309

EXAMINER
----------

TABATABAI, ABOLFAZL

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

2624

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	01/04/2007	PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/608,832

Applicant(s)

CLINE ET AL.

Examiner

Abolfazi Tabatabai

Art Unit

2624

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on June 23, 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 1-36 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 37 and 38 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 23 June 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 7/28/03.

- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### **Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101**

1. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

The USPTO "Interim Guidelines for Examination of Patent Applications for Patent Subject Matter Eligibility" (Official Gazette notice of 22 November 2005), Annex IV, reads as follows:

In contrast, a claimed computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program is a computer element which defines structural and functional interrelationships between the computer program and the rest of the computer which permit the computer program's functionality to be realized, and is thus statutory. See Lowry, 32 F.3d at 1583-84, 32 USPQ2d at 1035.

Claims that recite nothing but the physical characteristics of a form of energy, such as a frequency, voltage, or the strength of a magnetic field, define energy or magnetism, per se, and as such are nonstatutory natural phenomena. O'Reilly, 56 U.S. (15 How.) at 112-14. Moreover, it does not appear that a claim reciting a signal encoded with functional descriptive material falls within any of the categories of patentable subject matter set forth in Sec. 101.

... a signal does not fall within one of the four statutory classes of Sec. 101.

... signal claims are ineligible for patent protection because they do not fall within any of the four statutory classes of Sec. 101.

2. **Claim 37** is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter as follows.
3. **Claim 37** is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter as follows. Claim 37 is drawn to functional descriptive material recorded on a computer-readable medium. Normally, the claim would be statutory. However, the specification, at page 6, paragraph [0025], defines the claimed computer readable medium as encompassing statutory media such as a

Art Unit: 2624

"RAM", "floppy", "CD-ROM", "flash memory", "hard drive", "optical drive", etc, as well as ***non-statutory*** subject matter such as a computer data signal embodied in a transmission.

A "signal" embodying functional descriptive material is neither a process nor a product (i.e., a tangible "thing") and therefore does not fall within one of the four statutory classes of § 101. Rather, "signal" is a form of energy, in the absence of any physical structure or tangible material.

Because the full scope of the claim as properly read in light of the disclosure encompasses non-statutory subject matter, the claim as a whole is non-statutory. The examiner suggests amending the claim to include the disclosed tangible computer readable memory media, while at the same time excluding the intangible media such as signals, carrier waves, etc. Any amendment to the claim should be commensurate with its corresponding disclosure.

4. Furthermore, **Claim 37** recites "A computer readable medium storing a set of **programmable** instructions configured for execution by at least one processor for classifying voxels of first and second images generated using first and second echoes corresponding to respective first and second sets of image acquisition parameters, the programmable instructions comprising...". However, the claim does not define a computer-readable medium or memory embodied with **computer** programmable instructions as required by 101 Interim Guidelines Annex IV. And is thus non-statutory for that reason (i.e., A claimed **computer readable medium** encoded with a **computer program** is a computer element which defines structural and functional

Art Unit: 2624

interrelationships between the computer program and the rest of the computer which permit the computer program's functionality to be realized, and is thus statutory.). That is, the scope of the presently claimed "a set of programmable instructions" (lines 1-2 of claim 37) can range from paper on which the program is written, to a program simply contemplated and memorized by a person. The Examiner suggests amending the claim to embody "a set of computer programmable instructions" on computer-readable medium in order to make the claim statutory. Any amendment to the claim should be commensurate with its corresponding disclosure.

5. The USPTO "Interim Guidelines for Examination of Patent Applications for Patent Subject Matter Eligibility" (Official Gazette notice of 22 November 2005), Annex IV, reads as follows:

Claims that recite nothing but the physical characteristics of a form of energy, such as a frequency, voltage, or the strength of a magnetic field, define energy or magnetism, per se, and as such are nonstatutory natural phenomena. O'Reilly, 56 U.S. (15 How.) at 112-14. Moreover, it does not appear that a claim reciting a signal encoded with functional descriptive material falls within any of the categories of patentable subject matter set forth in Sec. 101.

... a signal does not fall within one of the four statutory classes of Sec. 101.

... signal claims are ineligible for patent protection because they do not fall within any of the four statutory classes of Sec. 101.

6. **Claim 38**, define a data Signal with descriptive material. While "functional descriptive material" may be claimed as a statutory product (i.e., a "manufacture") when embodied on a tangible computer readable medium, a signal embodying that same functional descriptive material is neither a process nor a product (i.e., a tangible "thing") and therefore does not fall within one of the four statutory classes of § 101. Rather, "signal" is a form of energy, in the absence of any physical structure or tangible material.

### **Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112**

7. Claim 37 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter, which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

Claim 37 recites the **programmable instructions** comprising:

means for providing for accessing the first image.....

means for providing for accessing the second image.....

means for providing for determining.....

Claim 37, contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

### **Reasons for Allowance**

8. The following is an Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance.

The prior art of record fails to teach or suggest, system and method for segmenting tissue types in dual-echo magnetic resonance images comprising (a) determining  $R$  and  $\theta$  values associated with respective voxels of the array of voxels, wherein for each respective voxel  $R$  substantially equals  $(S1^2 + S2^2)^{1/2}$  and  $\theta$  substantially equals  $\arctan(S1/S2)$  for  $S1$  and  $S2$  associated with the respective voxel in combination into other features and elements of claims 1 and 21; (b) determining  $R$  and  $\theta$  values associated with respective voxels of the array of voxels, wherein for each respective voxel  $R$

Art Unit: 2624

substantially equals the distance of the point correlating to the voxel as plotted in the first plot from an origin of the first plot, and  $\theta$  substantially equals the angle of a line drawn through the origin of the first plot and the point from a positive x-axis of the first plot in combination into other features and elements of claim 17.

**9. Claims 1-36 are allowed.**

10. Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

**Citation of Relevant Prior Art**

11. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Apicella et al (U S 5,273,040) disclose measurement of ventricle volumes with cardiac MRI.

Wells et al (U S 5,551,431) disclose correction of magnetic resonance imager intensity in homogeneities using tissue properties.

Kao et al (U S 5,361,763) disclose method for segmenting features in an image.

Lorensen et al (U S 4,751,643) disclose method and apparatus for determining connected substructures within a body.

Art Unit: 2624

### **Contact Information**

11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to ABOLFAZL TABATABAI whose telephone number is (571) 272-7458.

The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Jingge Wu, can be reached at (571) 272-7429. The fax phone number for organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Abolfazl Tabatabai

Patent Examiner

Technology Division 2624

December 21, 2006

*A-Tabatabai*